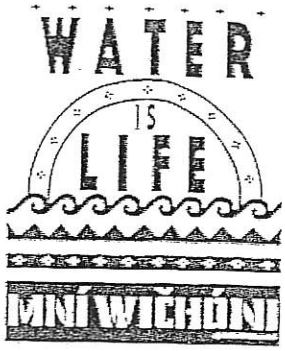
WATER IS LIFE! In fact, we as people are 70% water and would not last more than a few days without it.

Yet, one might think this valuable resource was no better than trash the way it is now treated in Wisconsin...



*Over half of private wells in Kewaunee County contain pathogens such as cryptosporidium, E. coli, salmonella, and rotavirus A – largely due to unmitigated dumping of factory farm manure

*In the Central Sands runaway high capacity wells benefiting agribusiness are dropping lake levels, drying up natural springs, and denying rural residents access to safe reliable drinking water

*Hundreds of beaches and water bodies across Wisconsin now have permanent warning signs for tourists and anglers due to dangerous levels of toxic algae, fecal matter, PCBs, and mercury

*The latest metallic sulfide mining scheme – the Back 40 – would put a 800' deep open pit less than 100' from the Menominee River threatening native culture, wildlife, and the Great Lakes with toxic runoff

*Ongoing extreme fossil fuel extraction such as frac sand mining and the proposed Enbridge 61 pipeline expansion already have long sordid track record of contaminating our state's soil, air, and water

According to the federal 1972 Clean Water Act, ALL water in the U.S. should be swimmable, fishable, and drinkable as it once was. Since ancient times clean water has also been considered a public good and a human right by most human societies – not the private property of wealthy elites.

What went so horribly wrong in Wisconsin?

To be honest, the corruption of our political process is to blame. Regulatory agencies have lost all integrity as they became rubber stamping operations serving powerful corporate interests. Millions have been spent on citizen lawsuits to defend our water from these many threats, yet when the courts do rule in favor of the public the governor and legislature just change the laws to make the effort useless. Our current system seems hellbent on taking away local control and any vestiges of democratic accountability – to the point where pollution trading and water privatization through corporate controlled market mechanisms will come to rule the world.

Thankfully, there are still many ways we can defend our precious water heritage!

When governments refuse to respect the will of the people, communities can always take direct action to compel them to do the right thing. In fact, most positive transformation in human history has not been the result of some leader "seeing the light," but has come from grassroots organizing by regular folks who demand change from a system that has failed them or – in some cases – the emergence of broader social movements that go even further to create a better system of their own design that serves the common good.

In Wisconsin we have many inspiring historic and ongoing examples of successful water defense campaigns: kicking Nestle/Perrier out of the state when they tried to install a massive bottling operation near Wisconsin Dells, shutting down proposals for the Crandon Mine near Mole Lake and more recently the GTAC mine in the Penokee Hills, county wide moratoriums on frac sand mining, land owners resisting eminent domain by foreign pipeline companies, and rural residents forming coalitions to challenge the factory farm lobby.

And this is only the beginning of what could be done!

To get an even better sense of the realm of the possible, it is worth exploring the ideas of Gene Sharp, a respected thinker about direct action whose insights and tactics have been used effectively worldwide. You can find out more, including his popular factsheet "198 Methods of Non Violent Direct Action" at: http://www.aeinstein.org/

If you are interested in hosting a community discussion about direct action to defend our clean water legacy in Wisconsin and becoming a WATER PROTECTOR YOURSELF! please contact:

Family Farm Defenders
PO BOX 1772
Madison, WI 53701
phone/fax: (608) 260-0900
www.familyfarmdefenders.org